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The Republic of Love: An Out Look of Woman on Love

Abstract: love an vital element for an effective relationship. Love is a blend of passions, perceptions, and behaviours that often plays a central role in cherished romantic relationships. Adolescent romantic relationships are marked by emotional state, thoughts, or performances within a relationship and have been found to be linked with tenderness, desire, assurance, sexual attitudes, trust, dependence and communication. Infact the feeling of love strengthening the relationship of Man-woman which is as old as human surviving in the society, man woman bondage is a biological need. The contemporary intricacy is an adding up of culture. It is a manifestation of survival it figures the central part in literature. Since the beginning, literary venture has been to represent this relationship along with its concomitants, and to bring out the misfortune or otherwise ensuing from it. Keeping that in view, I put

forward this research paper to bring out the every aspect of an intimate love relationship in *The Republic of Love*.

Key Words: Contemporary Intricasy, Hetro sexual love, sexual attitudes, cultural complexity, love relationship, woman role in love.

Introduction:

Love's a longing. That's never reached

Love Absolves by dissolving Hardness into softness

-Malavika Sanghvi

The ever-changing reality of life certainly reflects itself in literature as Carole Shields's novels are no exception as regards her representation of man-woman relationship. Like other novelists, she too explores the pressures and affectations in the area of life. That man-woman relationship forms a major theme in her novels. It can be seen from the numerical index. One of her novels taken up for study here reveal the varied phases of man-woman relationship; marital, premarital, and extra-marital. There is a complete portrayal of man-woman relationship in Carole Shields's novels. She speaks of what it was in the past in Canada, and how it extended to the modern times without much change. As a novelist with a keen observation of life, she examines the reasons for happy and unhappy marital lives. With the deep insight of a psychologist, she portrays pre-marital and extra-marital relationships, and shows sex as the chief instinct in man woman relationships. She has a clear and correct understanding of the working of the masculine and feminine mind.

This paper is a close observation of the way in which women writer selected to depict romantic relationships between the sexes during the late twentieth and early twenty first century period seems urgent. How a women writer is reimagining heterosexual love is brightened by the thought of feminist writers and theorists' responses to orthodox romance narratives and a

more general consideration on the kinds of concerns that have been elevated with regard to heterosexual relationships within the modern society. Moreover, the heterosexual relationship is an influential aspect of the traditional romance plot, so that an exploration of love between men and women is predictably connected to this, even where a writer may seek to rework or renounce romance's conventions. So, love affords more scope to cover diverse explorations of men and women's romantic relationships, while it also allows for more flexible extensions to images of heterosexual love. Bell Hooks is a contemporary African American feminist writer and theorist who significantly develop the feminist discussion and behaviour of heterosexual love. In an effort to reclaim love, Hooks tries to resolve the way in which women have learnt to feel embarrassed about their desire for love, in the same like Carole Shields also does in the novel *The Republic of Love*. Hooks cited in his book *Communion: The female search for love* that:

Many females are still confused, wondering about the place of love in our lives. Many of us have been afraid to acknowledge that 'love matters,' for fear we will be despised and shamed by women who have come to power within patriarchy by closing off emotions...Because we did not create a grand body of work that would have taught girls and women new and visionary ways to think about love, we witness the rise of a generation of females...who see any longing for love as a weakness. (148)

In turning now to an outline of this subsequent paper entitled as, "*The Republic of Love : An Out Look of Woman On Love* " The present novel taken for study is Written by Carol Shields, a American born migrated Canadian Writer, who lives in Winnipeg and teaches at the University of Manitoba, has been writing superb fiction for a decade and half yet still deteriorates in anonymity. Her last story collection, *The Orange Fish*, containing a wealth of engaging characters in difficult situations, eluded the notice of most American readers. Perhaps

this new and delightful novel *The Republic of Love* will prove her outstanding breakout book. A story of love and enchantment set in the coldest of winters; it searches the concerns, predicaments and obstacles facing the lucky and unlucky in love in the Twenty first Century, based on the novel of the same name by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Carol Shields.

This paper examines how the republic of love deals with the protagonist's search for love in the modern-day, Western city of Winnipeg, something that incorporates also looking at the subject of the single life and parting. This paper seeks to identify how romantic love is still underlined as a mainly significant human experience in spite of the Western world's tendency to belittle and moderate it.

Tom Avery and Fay McLeod deal marginally with the issue of love professionally, Tom is a late night radio DJ where he receives calls from listeners who often talk about their love life, and Fay is a researcher of mermaids for a folklore museum, her work which largely involves the aspect of love of the species. However, both have been unlucky in love in their own lives, but for different reasons based largely on their upbringing. Tom easily falls in what he believes is love in his frantic want for it to happen, not truly knowing what it is or isn't until it falls apart. He didn't have a model of a loving relationship in his determinative years as his eccentric mother, Betty Avery, was too worried dealing with her own issues of depression to provide much guidance to him. As such, Tom, at age forty, is thrice divorced. Never married Fay has always wanted a fairy tale relationship like her parents, Richard and Audrey McLeod, Audrey who has always specified that she and Richard have been their gift to the each other. In one of her interview with Elenor Watchel which is published in *Random Illuminations*: Shields clearly states her intention to get people to reengage with romantic love:

It's difficult to write about, and people have avoided it and have written about loss and longing instead. So I wasn't trying to usurp the love story; I felt more that I wanted to rescue it, hold it up against other major themes, like war for example. Do I think

love is a lesser subject than war? I do not. I think it is far more important than talking about war, or race relations, or these other things. Love is the basis of our lives. I don't think of it as a minor theme and yet we all know it's been relegated to...romance novels. Serious, reflective people do not fall in love; it's embarrassing even to say so. I don't believe that for a minute, so I want to write about love-(48).

Carole Shields opposes how romantic love has been disparaged and made into a minor theme, and wishes to rescue it by highlighting how love is a essential aspect of life. Shields tries in *The Republic of Love* to take a more positive approach and shed light on the valuable role romantic affections have to play in both women's and men's lives.

Shields's prominence on Tom's desire for love and connection is also indicative of the way in which *The Republic of Love* takes a different approach to the conventional popular romance. As Modleski has already been seen to suggest in *Loving with a Retribution*, men in this genre are presented as unfeeling and distant, which corresponds to the Western philosophical view of men as separate from the sphere of feelings: "The hero of Harlequins is more or less brutal typically in the first meeting between hero and heroine, the man's indifference, contempt is emphasized" (31-32). Yet, apart from the highlighting of Tom's emotional needs and sensitivity, what makes *The Republic of Love* different from the popular romance is the fact that readers are as exposed to Tom's thoughts and feelings as they are to Fay's, which is due to the way Shields has divided the chapters between them.

In *The Republic of Love*, Shields draws attention to the fact that women may in modern Western culture also take a negative approach to romantic love, despite having traditionally been allied with the sphere of emotions. As Sheila, one of Tom's ex-wives, says, 'Love,' she sniffed rudely. 'Who needs it' (49). Although such an attitude can be linked to the rather more pessimistic tone adopted by feminists like Millett and Greer in regards to heterosexual love

within patriarchal society, Shields suggests in the novel that women are confused within contemporary Western culture about what stance to take towards love.

Carole Shields moves, however, from focusing on these failed attempts at love to the coming together of Tom and Fay. Their first encounter is an intense experience for them both; this moment, which is initially brought forth to the reader from Tom's point of view, is defined in cinematic fashion, since everything else around the male protagonist seems to fall silent as Fay comes into his field of vision. To Tom, she appears to enter the house in slow motion, while he is also filled with a sense of magic and wonder at the sight of her:

Someone opened the wide screen door, and Tom saw a woman running up the sidewalk toward the house. Oh my God, he thought, and seemed to see her pinned to the air like a hologram. He had an impression of thinness, of dark hair swinging from side to side as she ran, of a wide skirt in several shades of blue...she held on to the strings of a dozen rainbow-colored balloons (174-175).

Fay is also transfixed by Tom from the very start:

'How do you do,' she'd said when they were introduced at the birthday party, and her first thought was that she would like to reach up and press the back of her hand against his cheek. She rested one arm along a cool shelf steadying herself (177).

Although obtainable from a point soon afterwards, when Fay is seen to look back to this first moment, it is still evident that she had an immediate and intense reaction to Tom. Shields portrayed Tom and Fay characters as falling in love unexpectedly and deeply, Carole Shields is effectively able to communicate to her readers that this is the start of a positive and meaningful relationship.

Yet, while Fay and Tom's reaction to each other does settle that this is the beginning of a new relationship, it is of no surprise to the reader that these two have come together. Even

though the author entitled the third chapter as 'Fortuitous Events', Tom and Fay's encounter does not appear accidental, as Shields has been preparing the ground for this from the start of the novel, pairing them in her narrative structure and portraying Tom and Fay both going through a series of romantic disappointments that filled them with a comparable sense of misery and loneliness. As Hammill illuminates:

The novel consists of the interwoven stories of two lonely people...They do not meet until half way through the book, but the alternation between their two perspectives sets up an immediate reader expectation that they will end up together (62).

Shields's highlighting on the importance of love in the novel also includes acknowledging the joy and intense emotions that come with the experience of falling in love. This is something she achieves by playfully portraying Fay as 'Limp with love' (246) and Tom as euphoric: 'He's over the rainbow. On top of the world. He's rock in' along. Burning, burning in a sea of love. Burning up with love' (244). In spite of the rather jokey tone adopted in the depiction of Fay and Tom, using these cliched expressions of love, Shields still manages to successfully transmit the delight the couple experiences, whilst also emphasizing the joy and headiness of falling in love. Rather than undermining these feelings, Shields is intent on claiming love as a real and valid manifestation in people's lives.

Carole Shields, as seen earlier, stated a positive view of the experience of falling in love in her novel, 'Really Being in Love Means Wanting to Live in a Different World,' thereby helping resist the tendency with in Western culture to dismiss this state: 'We all do it. It is gripping, exciting. We long for it. It makes other more politically 'correct' areas of our life pale by comparison Its power is unquestionable' (157).

While Shields playfully uses cliched terms to express the joy of being in love for Fay and Tom, she is simultaneously aware that 'light' versions of romantic love are endlessly

recycled in songs and films in the Western world. Shields ventures on the potential to reimagine romantic love in alternative ways, rather than repeating old, tired patterns. Another point Shields endeavours to emphasize is that the need and desire for love is not elite to the main characters. In the novel, "Love is a republic, not a kingdom" (224), thus suggesting love is not the right of a privileged few, but of everyone. Indeed, it is an experience common to most of the characters in the novel; for instance, Tom's mother is seen to have found love with the man she married at the age of fifty-two, while Fay's family members are also in loving relationships:

I love you' is what her parents must say a thousand times. And what her...brother, Clyde, must whisper to his dear Sonya And Onion and Strom. Surely mysteries must have been exchanged between the two of them. Almost everyone gets a chance to say it-I love you. And to hear it said to them (224).

In looking closely at the phrase 'I love you', Shields highlights her belief that romantic love is not the exclusive privilege of the central couple. It must be said, though, that Shields does rather gaily assume that everyone gets the same chances for love as her relatively privileged white, middle class characters, without considering the kind of presumptions and hardships that might make this an impossibility for certain individuals. However, while Shields could have dealt with this in a more careful and subtle manner, she does, at least, demonstrate that age does not alter the desire for love, as the love between Fay's parents, and the older couple Onion and Strom, implies. Indeed, this topic will be further explored when looking at Lessing's novel *Love, Again*, which deals with a sixty-five year old woman's ardent longing for love. While love is prevalent in the novel, regardless of age, Shields does not imply that these romantic relationships are problem free.

In fact, Tom and Fay are seen to separate for a while following Fay's father's decision to leave his wife after forty years of marriage:

Everywhere she looks she is pierced with the fragility of human arrangements. No, no, she suddenly sees; she cannot open her body to such harm. Out of love, or its punishing absence, her drugged mother is slumped before a television set. Her father, who has survived on love's diminishing curve all these years has exiled himself to a dark brown solitary cave. 'Tom,' she finds herself stammering into the receiver. 'Listen. I'm so sorry, but this just isn't going to work out' (331-332).

The unpredicted termination of their wedding indicates how Shields manages to further postpone the moment when Fay and Tom truly settle down together, in the way the start of their relationship was delayed with the inclusion of Fay's trip to Europe and, as already mentioned, with the initial deferral of their first meeting. However, it must be standard that this tactic of delay largely depends on the bringing of obstacles, which are an essential element in the traditional plot of romance. Stacey and Pearce explain that, in regards to the classic romance narrative, 'the story offers the potential of a heterosexual love union whose fulfilment is threatened by a series of barriers or problems like all quests its structure requires the overcoming of obstacles' (15-16). Therefore, the assimilation of these obstacles to Tom and Fay's happiness as a couple points to how the Republic of Love is, in certain ways, basically dependent on prior romance forms.

However, although the obstacles faced by the central couple indicate how the novel draws on features that are intrinsic to the traditional romance plot, it is also necessary to consider how Fay's sudden decision to call off the wedding allows Shields to highlight that individuals tend to make expectations about romantic love based on what they have learned from their families. Indeed, it is evident that her parents' previously happy marriage had led Fay to believe in love as a positive good, a conviction then devastated by their sudden separation.

While Shields could be appraised further for signifying that the marital union functions as the privileged basis for true tenderness between men and women, it is clear that she wants to point out that marriage does allow for the building of a sense of kinship and construction. Shields has been mentioned earlier in her another novel *Happenstance*, and suggest that marriage or a 'happily ever after' is not the necessary outcome of all relationships, it is apparent that she is far from opposed to this form of commitment and that she is prepared to draw on its positives. In doing so, Shields questions an idea that was prevalent in earlier decades; she comments, in one interview with Donna Krolik Hollenberg and Carol Shields, 'An Interview with Carol Shields' *Contemporary Literature* "in the seventies...I saw so many women leaving their marriages in search of 'freedom.' I'm not sure anyone then, or now, can define freedom, but the definition can be broadened to include ties of loyalty and love"(*Contemporary Literature* : 343-344, 1998) . Shields evidently wants to convey the readers that to consider the positive potential of marriage, and not see freedom as divorced from love and long-term commitment. So, although feminists like Germaine Greer opposed, in *The Female Eunuch*, the 'domestic romantic myth' (211) and tried to show women who have traditionally been dependent on their husbands that marriage does 'not provide emotional security' (-272), Shields takes a somewhat different approach in *The Republic of Love*. Indeed, this positive attitude to marriage is also evident in Ally McBeal's presentation of a modern young woman viewing marriage, and career, to be important aspects of her fulfilment. Stephen Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon also commented in their book *Postfeminism*. These more affirmative views of marriage, which can be linked to the late twentieth century tendency to "fashion new styles of feminism" (64), contrast the ideas expressed in the seventies by feminists like Germaine Greer. Yet, while Shields highlights marriage's positive potential, she does not idealize marriage; on the contrary, she clearly acknowledges the problems of marriage, as her depiction of Tom's three divorces and Fay's parents' marital problems indicate. So, even

though Shields supports marriage, she does not approach it in a simplistic and romanticized manner (*Narrative Hunger* and the *Overflowing Cupboard*, Eden and Goertz- 33).

It is noteworthy that Carole Shields strives throughout *The Republic of Love* to reclaim romantic love's importance, rather than allowing its continued dismissal as inconsequential and trivial. In doing so, Shields also acknowledges the joy and intensity that comes with falling in love; however, the focus on Fay and Tom's happiness as a result of their meeting does not mean that she creates an idealized situation in which the two main characters be present only for each another, as their relationship is greatly influenced by the people around them. Indeed, this is one of the ways in which Shields manages to highlight the differences between *The Republic of Love* and romantic fiction, despite occasionally drawing on the genre in her novel. Additionally, Shields endeavours in *The Republic of Love* to portray romantic love in a specifically late twentieth century context; as part of her aim to do so, the author can be seen to come to terms with a number of different, sometimes damaging, attitudes to love in modern day society, particularly through her portrayal of Tom and Fay's previous romantic involvements. Although Shields's attempts to stress the love centered theme of the novel push her at times to include certain exaggerated romantic scenes. *The Republic of Love* novel story was renewed as a film adaptation in 1996, when Triptych Media producer, Anna Stratton, the film director read the book and was highly impressed with its humour and diversity of characters, and confessed to being a fan of Shields's writing. Shields strives to depict love in a way that reflects men and women's experiences nowadays and is realistic and relevant to her readers.

Conclusion:

The Republic of Love has its own hidden presence. The narrator relates a series of incidences, coincidences and accidents in the lives of Fay and Tom and in the process of

developing their two separate experiences of the world, creates the possibility that they will meet and fall in love. Shields uses the idea of possibility in this novel. *The Republic of Love* is one of Shields' most dialogic novels. Although the genres of the fairy tale and the novel blend, they also remain separate and complementary, a dialogue between narrative romantic structures that constantly keeps the ending in sight. Shields' dexterously blends two narrative structures. Overall, the book is a diptych: the first half a mounting droll foreplay to Tom and Fay finally meeting, the second a perceptive exploration of why fulfillment is seldom easy. At the same time, Shields braids the novel's thirty eight chapters by alternating between Tom's and Fay's viewpoints. Long before they meet, we've grown to know and like each from inside their own perspective, so it becomes particularly entertaining when we begin to see them from the outside, through each other's eyes. By playing with the form of the popular romance, Shields uses a familiar narrative structure as well as markers of everyday life in Winnipeg in order to solicit readers' capacity for identification.

At the same time, the transgression of the plot paradigms by the use of ambiguity and irony draws the readers' attention to the way the narrative has been constructed based on convention and expectation while frustrating both. Like the popular sentimental romance, *The Republic of Love* uses language to describe events in a straightforward and unambiguous way.

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